The Significance of Satan in Paradise Lost

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人文科学研究科　英文学専攻
博士後期課程２年　菅　野　智　城

Introduction

John Milton (1608-74) published *Paradise Lost* in 1667. Needless to say, this work has influenced the history of English literature. The themes in this literary work owe much to Milton's own experiences. The age when he lived was a revolutionary period, and was very complex because of religious conflicts between several thoughts, e.g., Arminianism, Calvinism, Independency, Presbyterianism, and so on.

In March 1649, after the execution of Charles I, Milton was invited to be Secretary for the Foreign Tongues by the new republican government. Moreover, he agreed with the execution of the king in his political pamphlet *Eikonoklastes* in the same year. His political thought is excessive and radical because it comes from his devout faith. In 1660, however, two years after Oliver Cromwell died, the Commonwealth failed with the limits of its policy, so Milton was exposed to danger. It was fortunate that he was let off with only two months' confinement and the burning of his some tracts. He was released through the efforts of friends such as Andrew Marvell. That Milton escaped the death penalty is mainly because his talent as a literary man was greatly respected and because he no longer had political importance.

The two extreme experiences of participation in the revolution and defeat made Milton's literary attainments more abundant and deeper. It is true that Milton's literary activities were restrained during the participation in the revolution; he devoted his time to political and religious discussions. But the plan of his *Paradise Lost* seemed to be elaborated to some extent in this period. In any rate, there is no doubt that Milton deepened his understanding of certain virtues-reason, patience, temperance, and tolerance-through his bitter experiences such as the separation from his wife, his blindness, and political setbacks. As the result, he found the human themes of the poem.

1. The Problem of Satan

In the poem Milton shows his political and religious thoughts that were formed by such experiences, relating them with contemporary social conditions. Even if the poem reflects the social circumstances, it can never exceed the frame of fiction so far as it is a literary work. Hence, there are a variety of interpretations. Especially, Milton's Satan has been approached from moral and theological viewpoints, for the image of his Devil gives the reader a strong impression, even though it is essentially evil. For example, Dr. Johnson does not admire Satan nor condemn him, but he only sees the Devil as an evil character in the poem: "The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked" (120). His notion may be appreciated to a degree because of his objective and cool consideration. Johnson is well known for his severe attack to Milton's political position, but we must not forget that Johnson approves of the lofty morality of the poem. Yet his opinion about the matter of Satan is too brusque, for he starts from the ultimate theme which is built up through the poem and avoids dealing with the conflict between good and evil in the course of the story. Johnson's criticism is related to the rational nobility of the poem so closely that it neglects the intermediate parts of the poem; he ignores the character of Satan.

It goes without saying that the Romantic poets found sanctity in Satan's dynamism and associated this character with a true hero. They were fascinated with an image of the Devil who was energetic and powerful in Hell.

Their support of Satan inspired their imagination; especially William Blake sanctified Satan and identified the Devil with Milton. However, admiration from the perspective of romanticism is unbalanced because it is apt to neglect a system of rational order. Their claims, in contrast to Johnson's, is tied to the Devil's side so closely that Milton's theme in the poem was almost ignored. Milton has never said Satan should be admired more than God should.

The difference of opinion between Johnson and the Romantic poets is a difference in sympathy towards Satan. This problem has been discussed between two axes, i.e., approval and disapproval. In the twentieth century, moreover, it was separated from a theological debate and discussed on various levels.

It is necessary to mention three critics who refer to Milton's Satan. First, C. S. Lewis, ranking Satan as an evil being, recognized his ingenious portrayal. He dealt with the problem of the Devil's will on the assumption that "he [Satan] has no choice" and concluded, "Satan wants to go on being Satan" (100). Lewis committed the matter to the reader's taste, his judgment. His argument that Satan chooses to become a devil in the limited course of the story would be profitable in understanding the unchangeability of Satan's mind. Second, E. M. W. Tillyard attacked Lewis's interpretation that exposes us to the "danger of making him [Satan] too cheap" (Tillyard 53-54). Lewis gives a ridiculous image to the figure of Satan. Tillyard, by humanizing Satan, found a sense of irony in the Devil's defiance and pointed out the tragic nature. He also pointed out the resemblance between Milton's Satan and Shakespeare's Macbeth, and gave a sympathetic image to the nature of Satan. He deals with the problem of tragic degeneration more deeply than Lewis. Finally, William Empson superimposed God in the poem on an autocrat in the real world and gave the Devil's party a degree of righteousness through his detailed analysis. He dealt with Milton's God critically. Empson regarded the text as autonomic, and considered each local simile to be an organism directed toward the total subject of the work. By analyzing the heroic and magnificent depictions of Satan, Empson insisted that God's omnipotence could be regarded as finite. His suspicion of God is impressive when he says that

> If they [the rebels] can fight against him [God] for three days, that is enough to prove that he has not got absolute or metaphysical power; . . . therefore he has been cheating them, and, however powerful he may be, to submit to him would be dishonourable. (40)

Empson's argument is very stimulating and increases the range of new interpretations, but it seems to be imaginary and separates from *Paradise Lost*. His analysis of Satan is at a great distance from Milton's intention. We cannot deny that these critics have greatly influenced the modern studies on Milton. Although their arguments are beneficial, they do not go beyond the question "Hero or Fool?" (Empson 37). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the significance of Satan's being.

In dealing with this problem, the way of approaching Satan must be determined. The way of analyzing only Satan's external activities would draw the general conclusion that Satan is truly heroic but is to be excluded. Moreover, such way has the possibilities to fall into a severance between author and reader and lead to dangerous conclusions such as Empson's disapproval of Milton's God. Then, is it possible to enter into Satan's mind? This is a way of considering from the view of the Devil's side, but may lead to dire consequences, like the admiration of Satan by the Romantic poets, because such a way depends too much upon subjective tastes. Hence, it seems to be most suitable to relate Satan's existence with Milton's will. This is the best way to unite Satan, who finds his own justice in his defiance of God, with Milton, who regards Satan as an evil being, and not to simply identify the Devil with the poet.

It is true that Satan is an evil character and is excluded from the story by the creator, Milton. However, if Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a literary work is a closed world, Satan's being itself, as characterized by Milton, can become a small world in the poem, too. In addition, the characterized being has to be subordinated to the work itself as far as Milton is the creator. This does not imply that the being of Satan is an opponent of the whole sub-

ject of the poem but that it is one of the constituents that support the poem itself. To unite Satan's will with Milton's will enables us to transcend the issue of "Hero or Fool?" that is based on the moral conflict between good and evil, and one can find the ontological significance of Satan, that is, the value of Satan for Milton. Therefore, it is necessary to consider what qualities Satan has and how he transforms the significance of his being through the course of the story. Furthermore, this consideration will reveal how the role of the Devil contributes to the accomplishment of the human theme: "man's first disobedience" (PL 1.1).

2. Is Satan a Mimesis?

The poem, in fact, starts after Satan's first defeat in Heaven, and in Book X he tastes his second defeat, the sudden transformation of the rebel angels into serpent. It does not simply mean that Satan undergoes a complete defeat, but that he is given the eternal evil position by God. This is the limit of Satan as a heroic being; he is an imperfect hero. The people who wonder whether Satan is a hero have to accept this consequence. Therefore, what Milton gives to the Devil is not the brand of a hero but the stigma of an immoralist or a loser even though he has many virtues. Denying many superficial virtues, Milton deals with the subject of internal heroism.

Because Satan's heroism has limitations for its lack of internal virtue, this character is disqualified as a true hero. The image of a traditional hero such as Achilles or Hector is criticized in Milton's poem for the inevitable violence of external heroism, and the image of a Christian hero is presented as a substitution for it. Milton sublimates this Christian idea into a concept of natural humanity, which transcends even the category of hero. It is an undoubted fact that *Paradise Lost* is not a simple story of admiring heroism but a story of pursuing humanism. This fact, however, raises the question: why does Milton spend so many lines on the Archenemy if he wants to deal with the theme of man's first fall? As Robert Mcmahon says, "he [Milton] does not have to sing of Satan in Hell. His proem commits him only to 'Man's First Disobedience,' and he could have begun his poem with Satan in the Garden" (71). Mcmahon's statement is truly reasonable, but Satan, whom Milton portrays so impressively, is too large and strong to be seen as a foil to Adam and Eve. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the significance of the existence of Milton's Satan.

Aristotle considered that "mimesis" is the absolute basis for works of art, and emphasized the value of poet. The distinction between historian and poet, as Aristotle says in *Poetics*, is that

> the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. (234-35)

In contrast to Aristotle, his teacher, Plato, puts works of art at a third remove from truth (*Rep.* 426-33). According to him, the painter or poet imperfectly imitates the craftsman's products, which in turn imitate the idea or form. A work of art, the imitation of an imitation, is inferior to the products of handicraftsmen because the painter or poet only presents the object as an imitation of a phantasm. That is why Plato considers artistic presentation to be a worthless thing. Plato, in fact, tries to regard poetry's passion as harmful to rational order. In the conflict between philosophy and literature, as Mark Edmundson says, Plato considers philosopher to be "a member of an elite," and poet to be "a democrat, a man of the crowd" (6).

The relationship between truth and mimesis can be applied to the case of Milton's Satan. The figure of the Serpent in the Scriptures or other apocryphal prophecies is the imitation of the idea of evil itself; and Milton in his Christian poem portrayed his Satan as an imitation of the general image of the Devil. That is to say, Milton's Satan is at a third remove from truth. But it is extremely difficult to say the image of Satan is inferior to the abstract idea of evil, for the figure of Satan, which Milton creates in the poem, has the various qualities. Milton's Satan truly reduces the purity of evil, but this should be discussed in Plato's sense of superiority or inferiority. Milton's depiction of the Devil is original as far as it is born from Milton's creation that is caused by his will itself.

Milton intentionally gives many virtues to the antagonist of the poem; as a result, Satan takes on the significance of a being entirely different from the abstract idea of evil. Therefore, Milton's Satan is not a worthless imitation as Plato assumes.

Nevertheless, there is no room for questioning whether Satan is a hero or not, for this antagonist is based on the Scriptures. The reader's basic interpretation of the image of Milton's Satan never oversteps the frame of the Bible, however many attractive virtues this character is given. It is true that Satan is an imitation of the general image of the Devil. When we think of *Paradise Lost* as a literary work, however, there is enough room for controversy in the process from Satan's defiance to his fall, although he is eventually ranked as a complete evil.

This means that one may find Milton's truth in Satan's drama. But the instinctive idea that Milton unconsciously depicts the Devil as an identifiable hero bears the risk of stumbling into dangerous interpretations as Saurat shows. Saurat thinks that Milton is unaware of his potential Satanism, but Riggs criticizes his interpretation as too simplistic (Riggs 61-62). Taking account of Milton's viewpoint of "hero" in Books XI and XII, we can find that the association of Satan with a true hero, as many Satanists claim, is a distorted interpretation. Even if Milton sometimes attacks the corruptness of the church, government, or monarchy, his attack is never directed at God; because he is a Puritan. Milton, according to Hill, puts emphasis on "the drama which decided the fate of humanity, but which also prefigured the struggle within every man and woman" (Hill, *Puritanism* 345). On the other hand, if the early impressive part of the poem was a presentation of Milton's creative intention, it could not be denied that his intention was also put into the figure of the Devil. But it is a narrow-minded consideration to assert that such a spectacular story was brought to an end only for the sake of emphasizing humanism; for it is possible to imagine that the sympathetic story of Satan created by Milton is the very process of the Devil from a fallen angel to a concept of evil, and that Satan still occupies an important position in the poem after his transformation into a serpent. That is, Satan's invisible influence is retained in the subject of humanism emphasized at the end of the poem, although he was driven out of the main story. Does Milton allow the evil quality of the fallen angel and give him a new position as man's indispensable part of evil?

This question is caused by an assumption that Milton gives a duality to the image of man. Everything has two aspects like good and evil, light and shadow, tenderness and severity. The possibilities of both good and evil coexist in the scene of the departure of Adam and Eve. That is, these contrasting ideas can be expressed or restrained by their own free will in their future life. Michael says that Adam gained "the sum of wisdom," but he does not imply the complete expulsion of evil from an individual. On the contrary, the eternal mixture of good and evil is expressed implicitly in the Archangel's words. The fact that mankind repeats many crimes in spite of having true knowledge is the best proof that evil is never extinguished. The end of the poem presents a repetition of crime, God's judgment, and man's repentance, i.e., a circle of good and evil as the fundamental quality of man.

3. Satan's Soliloquies

We need to consider how the two-sidedness of Milton's humanism is connected with the existence of Satan. No one can overturn the fact that Satan is a sympathetic character for many readers. It would be an intolerant act to regard such a sensitive reader, who is inspired with sympathetic feelings from Satan's figure, as an impious person, and to drive him away, for such sympathies are inspired not only by his words and actions, like rhetoric, revolutionary air and leadership, but also by his natural qualities. This has something to do with Milton's own sympathetic stance towards Satan. The fundamental nature of Milton's sympathy can be found in a fundamental characteristic of the human mind; it is agony. This factor makes the impression of the Devil more complex. While Satan is a magnificent leader before his followers, he agonizes in the solitary scenes. Such agony is seen in his various soliloquies in Books IV and IX.

The first monologue in the beginning of Book IV is so impressive that we can find two matters: Satan's agony caused by the conflict between good and evil, and Milton's position on the relationship between Satan and God. In

this soliloquy, there is a large possibility that this monologue reveals his true heart, for he speaks to himself not to others. One who regards it as a rhetorical deception would be too suspicious. Milton is not so spiteful to his reader.

The important point is that the Fiend regrets his defiance against God and recognizes his fault:

> Ah wherefore? He [God] deserved no such return
> From me [Satan], whom he created what I was
> In that bright eminence, and with his good
> Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
> What could be less than to afford him praise,
> The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,
> How due! (4.42-48)

Naturally, obedience toward God was not humiliating for Satan. On the contrary, it was a glorious and joyful service for him to perform. But the more he was given the honor in Heaven, the more his pride and egoism increased. This cycle made him feel strong anxiety for his downfall. Such an uneasy state of mind could be dissolved only by winning higher honors. And the way to end the vicious cycle was to become a god himself:

> lifted up so high
> I sdained subjection, and thought one step higher
> Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
> The debt immense of endless gratitude,
> So burdensome, still paying, still to owe. (4.49-53)

Satan had his defiance against God in mind because he sought the selfish faith and its glory too much; his excessive faith changed into the hate. Being conscious of this, Satan cries, "all his [God's] good proved ill in me [Satan] / And wrought but malice" (4.48-49). This sense of regret continues to the curse of his fallen lot:

> Be then his [God's] love accurst, since love or hate,
> To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
> Nay cursed be thou, since against his thy will
> Chose freely what it now so justly rues.
> Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly hell; myself am hell. (4.69-75)

The logic of this soliloquy is more anguished and incoherent than that of the speeches in the first two books. While Satan condemns God's love, he also blames himself for his bold will. His asking to himself cannot find the natural cause of the crime.

Sinking in such a confused state, Satan also cannot escape out of his despair. But it is important that he tries to find a way to obtain God's forgiveness in his desperate lament: "O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for repentance, none for pardon left?" (4.79-80). That is, disobedience and obedience are mixed in his unstable mind. Similarly, this mixture of two opposite attitudes is seen in Samson. At the beginning of *Samson Agonistes*, the captured hero doubts God who gave the power in his hair, while he recognizes his wrong. Though Satan and Samson superficially resemble each other, the distinctive point between them is Samson's acceptance of submission. Samson controls his doubt concerning "Divine prediction" (SA 44) and chooses the way of submission. Satan is lacking in this reflection.

In addition, Satan is indeed nervous of the word "submission" (PL 4.81). The acceptance of it here is regarded

as a decrease in his accumulated glory. The pride and his "dread of shame / Among the Spirits beneath" (4.82-83) do not allow it, so that an instability of mind is caused. The honor gained is so high that Satan is oppressed by "The debt immense of endless gratitude" (4.52), which comes from his subjective assumption. Although Satan regrets his adventurous deed, he cannot accept submission to God because of his perverted pride, and is forced to choose the only alternative to oppose the Almighty power.

Hence, that Satan's decision of defiance is drawn out of his sorrowful and agonizing monologue implies that Satan is not willing to set God at defiance. In the face of his desperate fate, the agonizing angel makes a farewell speech to Heaven and his glorious past:

> All hope excluded thus, behold instead
> Of us outcast, exiled, his new delight
> Mankind created, and for him this world.
> So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
> Farewell remorse! (4.105-10)

It can be thought that this declaration is an acceptance of being an absolute evil, which is a reluctant choice and is in opposition to the acceptance of submission. Satan's determination resulting from agony differs entirely from Adam's one to live "well" . Adam's unstable mind after his sin becomes settled by Michael's instruction. On the other hand, the fallen angel tries to escape from his unbalanced state of mind by both separation from good and belief in his own justice, and flies to paradise for the purpose of corrupting man without knowing what end will come from the accomplishment.

The agony of his miserable state can also seen in his soliloquy in Book IX. Satan calls the earth in the same way he does in the curse on the sun in Book IV. In this monologue, however, no expression of regret is found. It is true that Satan sorrows at his fall in the paradisal world:

> O foul descent! That I who erst contended
> With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
> Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime,
> This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
> That to the highest of deity aspired. (9.163-67)

But his agony is not so serious in this soliloquy, for he has already announced his separation from Heaven, and now he tries to be the idea of evil itself. In his process of becoming evil, the sun and earth might provide the opportunities for him to repent his sin. But Satan is never given the opportunity for true repentance as Adam and Eve are, as far as *Paradise Lost* originates naturally in the Bible. He cannot avoid his doom. The more Satan approaches the accomplishment of his end, the more his unbalanced state of mind dissolves. Satan's journey from Hell to the earth, thus, constitutes a process of transformation into the absolute concept of evil. When Lewis says that the figure of Satan is changed "From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, from thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake" (97), the story of the Devil is only degenerative, but it is doubtful that his inwardness is never subtle or powerless.

The subject matter of this monologue in paradise is not agony but envy. Satan surely hails the earth created by God, but his words only strengthen the misery of his unchanging state, so that his agony changes into irritation:

> but I in none of these
> Find place or refuge; and the more I see
> Pleasures about me, so much more I feel

Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
Of contraries. (9.118-22)

Such an irritated sense sufficiently shows that Satan's envy of the earth's beauty causes a strong jealousy and a sense of inferiority, and that they make him stiffen his resolution to defy God. This irritation is chiefly strengthened by the renunciation of his return to Heaven. Satan cries, "all good to me becomes / Bane, and in heav'n much worse would be my state" (9.122-23), but he overcomes his regret for the past with a sense of renunciation, and recognizes his will of defiance anew:

Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
Let it; I reck not, so it light well aimed,
Since higher I fall short, on him who next
Provokes my envy, this new favorite
Of heav'n, this man of clay, son of despite,
Whom us the more to spite his Maker raised
From dust: spite then with spite is best repaid. (9.171-78)

Eventually, Satan finds the satisfaction of self-respect not in a return to Heaven but in the destruction of God's new creature.

Agony, envy, and renunciation erode Satan's confidence that God "could be defeated" (Empson 37). This is not accident but necessary to Satan's degeneration. The recognition of the beauty of the earth directs the Devil toward revenge, but his purpose is not to overcome God but to give him mental pain. Because Satan speaks of the impossibility of overcoming God from the beginning of the poem, what Satan finds in his agony and renunciation is the recognition of God' s absoluteness, and also his acceptance of the role of complete evil. Moreover, even man's fall is a necessary for the Devil's degeneration. In this sense, it can be thought that Milton incorporates predestination into the plot of Satan in the poem. That is to say, as Empson claims, "however wicked Satan's plan maybe, it is God's plan too" (39).

4. Agony

These monologues exhibit a large gap in emotion. This may show the tendency of manic-depressive psychosis. For example, as Christopher Hill points out, Oliver Cromwell had been diagnosed with melancholia in 1628 (*God's Englishman* 46). This fact may not be entirely unrelated to the period of Cromwell's lowered status-his farming years. Cromwell himself might have been suffering between the ideal and the real, though his melancholia ended with his religious conversion in around 1638. Similarly, Satan's melancholia is ended with the renunciation of his return to Heaven, such as his conversion from monotheism to polytheism[1]. That Satan and Cromwell resemble each other is not only because they are revolutionaries but also because they choose a new voyage in pursuit of the truth that sacrifices former glory, happiness and faith; they premises the resolution to accept all suffering and the impossibility of going backward.

The process of Satan from agony to conversion can be connected with Milton's personal circumstances. For three years from 1642 he lived apart from his wife Mary Powell. Her separation must have given him great pain, though she at last returned to him in 1645. Barbara K. Lewalski mentions, "He [Milton] describes the pain of loneliness, disappointment, and despair so feelingly that he must have experienced it acutely" (155). In this period, Milton started to work on the problem of divorce, and in 1643 wrote *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. In this pamphlet, he declares the legality of divorce:

1 The poet narrates that Satan's followers were worshipped as pagan idols (1.374-75).

> That indisposition, unfitnes, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangable, hindring and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugall society, which are solace and peace, is a greater reason of divorce then [than] naturall frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutuall consent. (YP 2: 242)[2]

An unreasonable rule only disturbs the rational harmony of man. Milton assumes that it is much more immoral to bind a couple compulsorily by the system of marriage in spite of the unhappiness of a husband or wife. Hence, as we can see in Milton's position on divorce, the important thing is not to obey the established ideas blindly but to be in a natural state with a rational mind. Such a way of thinking might have been born from Milton's own agony, caught between the ideal and the real, between truth the falsehood.

If Milton created the poem from his own personal background of political and religious contexts, Satan's abandonment of the past would be similar to Milton's position that agony and the pursuit of the ideal should naturally go together. By regarding Satan's agony as his real self, therefore, we can find that the Devil's rhetoric and his bold actions are like a false mask, and that his true face is always tinged with melancholy.

The soliloquy monologues in Books IV and IX reveal several facts. First, Satan himself feels a gap between the true image of a weak being and the false image of a heroic and self-absorbed being. This is presented strongly in the agony of calling to the sun. Second, Satan's magnificent display is proof of his weakness. All superior and beautiful things are the objects of envy for the fallen angel. His insistence on honor is a manifestation of his inferiority complex.

What, then, rouses Satan as a weak being to attempt defiance of God? It must not be ignored that this defiance was caused by the sudden emergence of the Son of God. Lucifer, the former name of Satan, regarded it as an obstacle in his faith in God the Father, and felt a "sense of injured merit" (1.98), which is nothing but humiliation to him. This ironical consequence arises because Satan regarded faith as a kind of accumulation. Milton does not consider faith as hierarchical; on the contrary, it is naturally found in "human experience as a basis for understanding God's intentions and explicating his Word" (Lewalski 156). Milton's viewpoint on faith seems to be a notion that it transcends not only an attack on Catholicism, but also various doctrines or precedents in the various sects of the Anglican Church. He admonishes religious tolerance with reason. The writing of the pamphlet on divorce eventually caused him to convert from a Presbyterian to an Independent.[3] An affiliation with a particular sect is not so important for Milton. He values the enlightenment of reason on an individual level rather than blind obedience to a standard on a collective level. That is, Milton's view of faith is based on his own subjective conscience. On the other hand, Satan's hierarchical faith has the danger of falling into insistence on receiving reward for good deeds, which was seen in the issuing of indulgences by the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century. Satan attributes his defiance to "injured merit," but in a pure faith, Milton suggests, reason itself is the problem. Thus, it is nonsense for Milton that one's merit is raised or reduced, glorified or injured. Satan's goodness becomes distorted and changes into evil because he misunderstood the merit of faith. Therefore, Satan's evil would be born from good insofar as a strong faith was so close to his sense of profit and pride.

While the Devil's activities are emphasized with the word "bold," his real intention is rarely spoken of except in several soliloquies. The other characters in the poem besides God are not taught Satan's real intention by Milton. Those characters on the stage of the epic are only informed his actual words and acts. Thus, Satan's solil-

2 All citations from Milton's prose works are taken from *Complete prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82). All references of the Yale edition are abbreviated as YP.

3 Chistopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking 1978) 126-131. Milton's divorce pamphlet, which supported divorce and deuterogamy, was attacked by his long-time friend Thomas Young. Milton did not intend the publication to be an attack upon the Presbyterians, but Herbert Palmer, an influential person in the sect, called for the burning of the pamphlet After their attacks, Milton gradually became suspicious about Presbyterianism.

oquy has the aspect of dramatic monologue when it is spoken to the spectator, i.e., the reader.

This effect increases the tragic nature of Satan's drama all the more. In considering this matter, it is not so difficult to consider the tragic effect to be like a strategic device which gives the reader more sympathetic feelings. If Milton intends to rouse the reader's sympathy by giving Satan's character complexity both internally and externally, Milton's sympathetic intention would also enter in the figure of the Devil. When the defeat of Satan is considered from a theological angle, it is truly a parody of a traditional epic hero. But the end to which the agonizing angel comes is tragic. E. M. W. Tillyard points out the tragic nature of the Devil. According to him, Satan is neither "the hero with whom Milton in his heart morally sympathizes" nor "the fundamentally stupid and hence ridiculous rebel," but "a ruined archangel, a creature of the highest endowments perverted to ill" ; and he continues:

> Of course Satan was stupid, but it is terrible and tragic that one whose mental endowments were so transcendent should fall into stupidity; just as it is terrible and tragic that one whose capacity for love was so great should pervert that capacity to hate. (57)

Satan's perversion resembles Othello's degeneration from love of Desdemona into jealousy. Excessive tenderness may sometimes turn to hundred-fold hatred. Moreover, the tragedy of the Devil's story has a catharsis in a same way as Greek tragedies. That is, a catastrophe, his transformation into a serpent, comes first; and next a catharsis, the establishment of the eternal evil as an escape from an unbalanced condition, is brought about. Satan's arrival at the position of absolute evil, which is achieved by his mental immutability, is, whether a victory or a defeat, an accomplishment of his pursuit of an ideal won by overcoming his anxiety or fear of a fatal defeat. This is a kind of beauty in ruin. Conceiving the impossibility of overcoming God, Satan shouts defiance of God. Such an attitude would give the reader the impression of Satan as a short-lived revolutionist who contends with his enemy at the risk of death; on the other hand, his agony makes the impression of a patient person such as Samson. So the challenge of Satan to God in *Paradise Lost* is a battle against inner suffering such as agony or envy; even if it is a role given by God, Satan, who accomplishes his end, pursues his own truth and proves the power of his mind "not to be changed" (1.253) in the negative destiny imposed on him.

That Milton gives the portrait of Satan room for sympathy has a great significance of humanism, which is the subject of the poem. What is necessary to Milton's heroism is a kind of tolerance toward evil, and it has a relation to the two-sidedness of things as discussed above. Milton sees the evil side in a total humanity, not as something to be deleted but to be retained. One-sided approval of good or evil causes an unbalanced state of mind. For instance, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit because they were ignorant of evil as a human experience; equally, Satan was doomed to become the absolute evil because his pride or egoism abandoned goodness, i.e., obedience to God. At the end of the poem, Adam and Eve obtained true wisdom. This does not renew them as good beings, but develops them as higher beings in which good and evil coexist. Satan is let to live in man's mind as the side of evil. This is, so to speak, an accord of heroism with humanism; Satan's heroism is united with Adam's humanism or Milton's, and forms a complete human being in the interaction between good and evil. Adam and Eve acquired good from God and evil from Satan. And their moral judgment works only in the conflict between them. Therefore, the tolerant attitude toward the concept of evil, which has a positive influence on judgment, is a fundamental premise for the realization of Milton's ideal faith.

5. Ontological Significance

Milton's *Paradise Lost* takes up the subjects of religion, politics, humanism, the nature of the universe. In particular, the question of understanding Satan leads to countless interpretations. This problem must be considered along with Milton's creation. The creation of the poem never happened without Milton's motive. The immediate cause was actually drawn from his personal circumstances. For instance, the reason why Milton found the sub-

ject matter of the poem not in conflicts between gods and men, the traditional motif of epics, but in Adam in the Bible is because he dealt with such virtues as reason, magnanimity, patience, tolerance. It is possible to consider them to be superior things that transcend our real world. This superiority emerges within the poet in the form of a spiritual sense. And this sense is essentially inspired by intercourse with transcendental ideas, i.e., beauty, sanctity, eternity or divinity.

This can be said to be true for the whole of artistic activities. In the case of paintings, for instance, an artist is conscious of God when he paints a religious picture. Similarly, he feels the sacredness of labor or the blessings of nature when he seeks his subject matter in agriculture or harvesting. Even in the landscape, there can be the artist's impression of nature's beauty or fear. As Hans-Georg Gadamer says, "it is only by being pictured that a landscape becomes picturesque" (142). His notion gives universal significance to all depictions of nature. Wordsworth sings a feeling of sublime in beauty and fear of nature, so that the nature presented becomes the poet's original thing and has the truth of being.[4] The object is given a new significance of being through the artist's representative act. In works of art, thus, one can find the artist's intention inspired by superior things. What is represented, the original thing, becomes beautiful or holy, sorrowful or fearful, by the creator's will. What, then, does the creator feel in the superiority that exists in the transcendental world? It is a sense of fear. This idea is the very central factor that drives the motive of creation. This sense of fear does not mean that one runs away with a frozen face but that one holds feelings of awe, respect, reverence or longing. Thus, the artist or the creator is a mediator between the imaginary and the real world because he makes the superior thing concrete through his own body by the sense of fear. This is shown fully in the notion of a Muse whispering poetic words into one's ear.

Milton's Satan can be considered the same as other objects of art. By feeling the superiority and the sense of fear in the general image of Satan, Milton represented his own image of Satan in his imaginary world. In *Paradise Lost*, however, there is no message indicating the reader should conceive Satan as the very hero of the poem. The main motif of the poem comes to fruition in the pursuit of humanism in the last scene. While Adam makes good from evil, Satan does evil from good. Nevertheless, Milton's poem is made more complex than the other traditional epics by the fact that Satan cannot be ignored as a simple contemptuous fool in the process of developing the story. This should not be considered independently of the issue of Milton's creative intention. Satan is brought into existence as an original life by Milton's creation.

Truly, the way of separating the work from the author led to a great number of interpretations that no one had imagined. Such interpretations would be original as far as they arise in the reader's mind. This might be an inevitable consequence if it is true that "literature . . . has its original existence in being read, as that the epic has it in being declaimed by the rhapsodist or the picture in being looked at by the spectator" (Gadamer 160). But an interpretation that is completely separated from the creator constitutes only the relationship between the work and the reader and eliminates Milton or the narrator in the poem, so that the basis of existence of the work itself would be destroyed; *Paradise Lost* never does become Milton's work but the reader's work, and the synchronic relationship between the author and the reader dissolves. That is, the time and space of the work lose their significance.

The virtues or merits given to Satan are undoubtedly original because they are given meaning according to the creator's intention. This shows the ontological significance of truth for Milton. Satan changes God in his mind from an omnipotent and omnipresent being into a convenient one. This immanent impiety is nothing but self-justification. This is due to Satan's subjectivity, which changes faith freely. The self-justification from this subjectivity produces the paradoxical righteousness of the Devil's party and emerges as defiance of Heaven. This shows that Satan's truth is in himself. This position would be reflected by the fact that Milton's way of thinking did not

4 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson(London: Oxford UP, 1967).

fit in with particular sects and doctrines. The immanent nature of truth can also be seen in Adam. In this case, his truth emerges as immanent piety within the frame of Christian doctrine in which obedience to God is a fundamental premise. In the case of Satan, on the contrary, such a premise is eliminated by his self-justification. This is also a self-purification of subjectivity; no obstacle exists in a conversation with truth. In such a sense, Satan is conscious of his own truth more keenly than Adam; Satan is a pursuer of truth.

Satan's subjectivity is informed to the reader through his language. After his transformation into a serpent in Book X, we can no longer see the Devil's words or his subjectivity. The serpent, Satan, is dragged "in chain" (12.454) by Christ, but he utters no words; his presence is lost. However, it is not impossible to assume that the accomplishment of Satan's aim makes him satisfied to some extent, in the sense that his aim is only indirect revenge upon God, for what he tries to overcome is the "dire calamity" (1.189) of Hell, not the defeat of God himself. While Adam depends on an omnipotent power, Satan achieves the impossibility of overcoming it; the rebel feels that his ability makes the impossible possible by the accomplishment of his aim. Milton may think that Satan's activity is made free by the will of God. But when this is considered from the standpoint of Satan's subjectivity, it can be said that he finds the truth as far as he carries through his own belief by gaining the best result under the toughest conditions.

Conclusion

The problem of pursuit of the truth leads us again to Plato's position on art. He regarded works of art as harmful for the realization of a rational society. His statement that has caused many arguments in literature has its limits when the locus of the truth is considered. If the truth exists in the common "place" of man's rational society, truth itself cannot be considered from outside of the mind. The common truth for everyone that is abstracted and separated from the instinctive mind, which arouses many emotions such as rage, joy, sorrow, is no longer the absolute truth but *sensus communis* as the lowest common multiple of the truths in everyone's mind, i.e., a simple phenomenon. Plato's criticism of art amounts to a kind of ingenious displacement by giving the meaning of man's ideal to a word: truth. As a result, the works of art were lowered to the lowest rank as an obstacle of the truth in a rational society, in spite of the fact that the artist's creation shows the truth. But the significant point is that truth itself originates from the rational mind. Even Plato eliminated the works of art because he knew they aroused passion in the mind. He recognized, "a certain love and reverence for Homer that has possessed me from a boy" (419-21). That is why his criticism of art is based upon the power of art. A society that rejects man's instinctive mind is a society that does not have the "catharsis of such emotions" (Aristotle, *Poetics* 230). Hence the works of art should not be lowered to a third remove from truth insofar as that they are created by the artist's rational or emotional mind.

That the truth originates from the mind is good proof that its purest influence is available only in individual subjectivity. If the interpretation of the truth differs from man to man, the existence of truth would be doubtful. For example, the idea of death in Book XI appears before many people in the various forms: murder, disease, and war. Cain, who killed Abel, faces the death of man, and many patients are in danger of death. Each of them thinks and interprets the significance of death freely, and each interpretation is original. When all interpretation concerning this idea is eliminated, what remains is not the general truth that "man sometime dies" but the phenomenon in the real world that a moving thing stops. When the interpretation of the truth is considered to be numberless, the ultimate question arises: what is truth?

It is more suitable to consider the truth to be subjectivity itself, which depends upon the individual tastes, for such a subjective truth has no commonality insofar as it is available in the mind. Milton finds his own truth in the idealization of humanism in creating the poem, and Satan finds it in the accomplishment of defiance in overcoming many difficulties. They opposed each other on a theological level. Suggesting ideal humanism in *Paradise Lost*, Milton does not completely exclude Satan's evil. Milton creates the poem as a closed place. In the limited

world of the work, one individual, which is characterized as Satan by the author, moves freely. Satan himself is also a small world in the work as a whole. Such a dual world becomes a unity when the being of Satan fuses into the large space of the work, as a cold virus becomes its antibody. Milton raises the image of Satan to a universal concept of evil together with the Devil's heroic virtues, and incorporates it as an indispensable part into the total image of man. This is the theme of the poem, at the same time it is also the original truth of Milton.

The seventeenth century when Milton lived was a turbulent age between the ideal and the real; history is like a repetition of conservation and innovation. In the conflict between establishment of a religious institution and its destruction, he showed a rough attainment of his belief in *Paradise Lost*. There, humanism and heroism influence each other and repeat conflict and accord. Such an image constitutes an emergence of his tolerant subjectivity. The perfection of man is also Milton's pursuit of the truth.

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